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ABSTRACT

These guidelines for gifted and talented education in Colorado are organized into four sections following the preliminary information, which lists key personnel for the Colorado State Board of Education, the Colorado State Department of Education, and the State Advisory Committee for Gifted and Talented Student Education. The first section offers a brief statement of the philosophy and rationale for gifted and talented education in Colorado. The second section presents the core guidelines which address: (1) definition of gifted and talented students; (2) identification of students for gifted and talented programming; (3) gifted and talented programming services; (4) accountability for gifted and talented programming; and (5) standards for personnel involved in gifted and talented education. The third section briefly notes guidelines for obtaining state funding for gifted and talented programming services. The fourth section lists the six state laws and regulations that provide the statutory and regulatory basis for gifted and talented education in Colorado. (DB)

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# GUIDELINES FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION IN COLORADO

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## Developed by

## The Colorado Department of Education and The State Advisory Committee for Gifted and Talented Student Education

## Approved by the State Board of Education

## March 9, 1995

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(as of January 1999)

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# GUIDELINES FOR
# GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENT EDUCATION
# IN COLORADO

## A. PHILOSOPHY AND RATIONALE FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION IN COLORADO

Most students of the same age share similar cognitive, affective, physical, and social-emotional developmental progress. However, there are students who fall outside their norm group in relation to one or more developmental or performance areas. Educators refer to students who are identified as being significantly outside the norm as "exceptional students." Exceptionality is a well-accepted concept in both psychology and education, and it is becoming increasingly better-understood in terms of educational practice.

In Colorado, gifted and talented children are included in the legal definition of exceptional children. While disabilities or language differences characterize other exceptionalities, precocious intellectual ability and marked potential for extraordinary performance are defining properties of gifted and talented children and youth.

Gifted and talented students need concerted support and encouragement from parents, the school system, and the community to achieve full development. Contrary to widespread belief, gifted individuals are rarely in positions or environments where they can simply "make it on their own." Lacking recognition of and accommodation for their educational and developmental needs, gifted and talented children and youth are at risk of failing to develop fully and to flourish educationally. They may, in fact, underachieve or strive for goals well below their potential. This can be a tragic waste for them personally and for society as well.

In a democratic and egalitarian society which places high value on the worth of every individual, the public schools have an obligation to provide appropriate educational opportunities that will enable each student to develop fully according to his or her potential. Therefore, it is the purpose of gifted and talented education in Colorado to address the unique educational needs of students who are gifted and talented to the end that they may grow to be fulfilled, productive and contributing members of society according to their promise.

## B. GUIDELINES FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENT EDUCATION

The State Board of Education and the Colorado Department of Education strongly recommended that districts and schools utilize the following guidelines when developing and implementing formal programs and educational programming services for students who are gifted and talented.

### 1. Definition of Gifted and Talented Students

Districts and schools should provide and use a written definition of gifted and talented students that is broad and comprehensive and includes general and specific categories of giftedness, such as the one below from the Rules for the Administration of the Exceptional Children's Educational Act (1 CCR 301-8, Section 2220-R-8.01 et seq.).

"Gifted children" means those persons between the ages of five and twenty-one whose abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment are so exceptional or developmentally advanced that they require special provisions to meet their educational needs. Children under five who qualify may also be served. . . .Gifted students are capable of high performance in any or a combination of these areas:

1) General or specific intellectual ability.
2) Specific academic aptitude.
3) Creative or productive thinking.
4) Leadership and human relations skills.
5) Visual, performing arts, spatial or musical abilities.
6) Psychomotor abilities.

The definition used by the district and schools should be the basis for gifted and talented programming services.

### 2. Identification of Students for Gifted and Talented Programming

Districts and schools should define and follow a process for identifying students for whom gifted and talented programming services are appropriate. This process should:

a) Provide information and guidance to parents, students, educators, and the community concerning identification purposes and processes;

b) Use a variety of assessment information for identification purposes, including, but not necessarily limited to, consideration of student performance, student behavioral characteristics, and student aptitude;

c) Acknowledge and utilize appropriate assessment information provided from outside the district or school identification process, such as anecdotal information from parents and/or formal assessment data gathered by qualified professionals;

d) Assure that a student is not denied gifted and talented programming services solely on the basis of a single measure used for identification purposes;

e) Make concerted efforts to identify students from a wide range of backgrounds and conditions, including, but not limited to, students who have disabilities, are economically disadvantaged, lack English proficiency, are ethnically/culturally diverse, or are underachieving;

f) Specify the educational needs of students, including their individual learning characteristics;

g) Take place as early as possible in a student's educational career and be accessible at any time, pre-K through grade 12.

3. **Gifted and Talented Programming Services**

Districts and schools should incorporate a variety of appropriate programming services, options, and strategies that:

a) Are matched to the identified academic and affective educational needs of gifted and talented students, including, but not limited to, skills and knowledge contained in district-adopted content standards;

b) Address student needs comprehensively through a combination of advanced/accelerated curriculum-based learning, advanced enrichment, social-emotional development, and guidance and counseling;

c) Provide regular opportunities for students to learn and work with peers of similar ability and learning interests;

d) Take advantage of instructional settings, groupings, and technology that are most appropriate for and least restrictive to the learning needs of these students;

e) Are available and accessible year to year and level to level, as the needs of the individual student requires, from kindergarten (or pre-kindergarten, if appropriate) through high school graduation.

4. **Accountability for Gifted and Talented Programming**

Districts and schools should implement an accountability approach that:

a) Provides comprehensive information about gifted and talented education in the district and schools to parents/guardians, students, educators, and the community;

b) Shows, through appropriate records of student performance, evidence of student growth, gain, and/or progress, both academically and affectively, commensurate with individual student needs and in relation to district-adopted content standards;

c) Keeps cumulative records of gifted and talented education programming undertaken by individual students, and provides these records to the students, their parents/guardians, and others as appropriate;

d) Demonstrates a commitment to gifted and talented education through administrative support, staff development, instructional practice, budget, and parental involvement;

e) Keeps financial records, maintains inventories, preserves student confidentiality, and reports as required by statute or rule.

5. **Standards for Personnel Involved in Gifted and Talented Education**

Teachers, support personnel, and administrators involved in any aspect of gifted and talented student education should possess pertinent knowledge and skills in gifted and talented education in relation to identification, programming design and delivery, instructional practice, student assessment, and evaluation of programming effects.

*Teachers and other instructional support personnel* who provide gifted and talented programming services should be able to:

a) Display and foster positive attitudes toward gifted and talented students, reflecting pertinent knowledge and understanding of the learning principles and educational needs of these students;

b) Differentiate instruction according to the academic and affective needs of these students, including, but not limited to, adapting instructional pace, curricular content and materials, learning environments, and student grouping patterns;

c) Consult and communicate effectively with other professionals, administrators, and parents about student needs and educational progress.

*Administrative personnel* should be able to:

a) Display and foster positive attitudes toward gifted and talented education in general based upon knowledge and understanding of the learning principles and educational needs of gifted and talented students;

b) Oversee and support accountability procedures relating to gifted and talented education, including awareness of and compliance with state rules and regulations;

c) Provide leadership in the development, implementation, and evaluation of programming services and instructional strategies utilized in gifted and talented education;

d) Obtain and allocate material, financial, and human resources necessary to address the educational needs of gifted and talented students;

e) Consult and communicate with other professionals and parents about all aspects of gifted and talented student education.

## C. Guidelines for Obtaining State Funding for Gifted and Talented Programming Services

School districts may apply for state funding to supplement district budget for gifted and talented education efforts. In order to qualify for state funds, districts must submit an annual plan for gifted and talented education. Section 8 of the State Board of Education Rules for the Administration of the Exceptional Children's Educational Act defines the procedures for making application for state funding.

## D. The Statutory and Regulatory Basis for Gifted and Talented Education in Colorado

The following statutes and/or rules specifically address the education of gifted and talented students in Colorado:

1. **Exceptional Children's Educational Act** (C.R.S. 22-20-101 et seq.), adopted 8-12-76, last amended May, 1996; and **Rules for the Administration of the Exceptional Children's Educational Act, Gifted Student Programs** (1 CCR 301-8, section 2220-R-8.00 et seq.).

   - Defines gifted children as a category of "exceptional children"
   - Provides an educational definition of gifted children
   - Encourages high-priority consideration for the identification of gifted children who are economically disadvantaged, and culturally or ethnically diverse, or have disabilities
   - Makes formal programs for gifted students voluntary on the part of school districts
   - Encourages collaboration with institutions of higher education to provide staff development and in-service opportunities in relation to educational programs for gifted students
   - Specifies ways districts can use state funds allocated for gifted student education

- Establishes a separate line in the appropriation bill for funding programs for gifted and talented students

2. **Gifted and Talented Students** (C.R.S. 22-26-101 et seq.), adopted June, 1985.

   - Authorizes the Colorado Department of Education to purchase educational services to serve gifted and talented secondary students.

3. **School Reform: Standards-Based Education** (C.R.S. 22-53-401 et seq.), adopted May, 1993.

   - Creates the standards-based education initiative that serves as the basis for school reform and improvement in Colorado
   - Defines gifted and talented students as a category of exceptional children
   - Requires of school districts, the Department of Education, the State Board of Education, and the Standards and Assessment Development and Implementation Council that specific consideration and means be taken in all aspects of the development and implementation of standards-based education to address the special learning needs of all exceptional children, including gifted and talented students

4. **Colorado Magnet School for Mathematics, Science, and Technology** (C.R.S. 22-84-101 et seq.), adopted April, 1994.

   - Establishes the Colorado Magnet School for Mathematics, Science, and Technology especially to address the needs of mathematically and scientifically talented and highly motivated students.
   - Creates an advisory board responsible for developing a plan for the school, including the school design, curriculum, instruction program, admissions procedures, administration, and funding recommendations
   - Requires the advisory board to report its plan and recommendations to the state board of education and the state general assembly by Spring, 1995.

The following statutes have special relevance to the education of gifted and talented students:

5. **Fast Track Program** (C.R.S. 22-34-101 et seq.), adopted 1981.

   - Provides for high schools to enter into cooperative agreements with institutions of higher education to allow high school seniors who have completed requirements for high school graduation to take college courses while retaining high school activity eligibility.

6. **Postsecondary Enrollment Options Act** (C.R.S. 22-35-101 et seq.), adopted 1989.

   - Provides opportunity for high school juniors and seniors to seek more appropriate academic challenges or a more appropriate educational setting by enrolling in college courses
   - Allows students to earn both high school and college credit for college courses successfully completed
   - Requires school districts to reimburse students/parents for high school students' higher education tuition for up to two courses successfully completed and passed per academic term